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ABSTRACT

The challenges facing urban elementary and secondary schools are like those facing suburban and rural schools, but there are complex circumstances that complicate efforts by urban school systems to carry out their mission. Schools in the cities have more students from impoverished homes, more foreign-born or minority group students, and more students suffering disabilities and shakier sources of financial support. Urban schools operate amid violence, crime, drug abuse, unemployment, poor housing, and poor public services. Educators in the United States and England looked at the nature of urban education as common ground for professional exchange. In 1987, English educators met with their U.S. colleagues and then visited U.S. elementary and secondary schools. In 1990, 60 U.S. educators met with British colleagues at a conference in London, and then visited urban schools throughout England. The paper presents the collective observations of the U.S. educators taken from summary sheets and diaries kept during the visit, as well as from discussions held at a retreat and from written summations. Nine sections deal with the following topics: overview of the organization of English schools; the setting; the quality, nature, and substance of teaching and learning; assessment and accountability; equity and access; teachers; supervision; governance and management; parents and external influences; and implications for practice and policies in the United States in regard to governance, national standards, assessment, principals, teachers, building community, organization and content, and equity. (SM)

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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH URBAN SCHOOLS

A Report of a Study Visit

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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH URBAN SCHOOLS

A Report of a Study Visit

Written by Gene I. Maeroff on behalf of an American delegation that included educators from Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Pittsburgh, Rochester, and San Diego.

The study visit that led to this report was organized by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in Princeton, N.J., and the U.S. Department of Education. The involvement of specific school systems was coordinated by the Council of the Great City Schools in Washington, D.C. Her Majesty's Inspectorate organized the visit in England, and was assisted by The Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges. Financial support was provided by the Coca-Cola Foundation, the ARCO Foundation, the American Express Philanthropic Program, and The Carnegie Foundation. In England, financial support was provided by Citicorp/Citibank and Whitbread and Company. The opinions expressed in the report are those of the visiting American educators.

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Introduction

The challenges that confront elementary and secondary schools in the big cities of the United States are in many ways not unlike those facing schools serving suburbs, small towns and rural communities. There are issues of teaching and learning, structure and organization, student motivation, staffing, finance and relations with parents. What is decidedly different about urban schools, though, is the complex overlay of circumstances that complicates and confounds efforts by big-city school systems to carry out their mission.

Schools in the cities have more students from impoverished homes, more students who are foreign-born and/or members of minority groups, more students suffering disabilities and shakier sources of financial support. Furthermore, urban schools operate amid settings in which violence, crime, drug abuse, unemployment, poor housing and insufficient public services are more common than elsewhere.

Those who work in city schools must, more than educators elsewhere, accustom themselves to trying to make education succeed under daunting conditions. They must grow especially sensitive to the needs of diversity and sometimes they must learn to take on roles that go well beyond those educators have traditionally filled. Some educators in the United States and England were intrigued by the idea that the special nature of urban education in the two countries might provide a common ground for professional and intellectual exchange. The door was opened to such an arrangement in 1987, when an agreement of intent was signed by William Bennett, then Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and Kenneth Baker, then Secretary of State for Education and Science in England and Wales. As a result, educators from England conferred with American colleagues in a conference at Princeton, N.J. and then visited American elementary and secondary schools, mostly in New York City, in October and November, 1988.

A reciprocal visit occurred in February and March, 1990, when an American contingent of 60 men and women met with British colleagues at a conference in London and then visited schools in cities throughout England. The trip to England came at a time of vast transformation for the educational system, which was trying to digest a host of changes—including the Education Reform Act of 1988—that were promulgated in a rather short time.

The exchange visits were organized on the British side by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and on the American side by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the U.S. Department of Education. The involvement of specific school systems was coordinated by the Council of the Great City Schools. The visit by the British educators was followed by the publication of a report, *Teaching and Learning in New York City Schools: Aspects of Education in the USA*. It was produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and based on the observations of the visiting educators. The document you are now reading is, in effect, a counterpart to that earlier report.

Teaching in the City was the theme that dominated the exchange and participants quickly discovered areas of common interest. Educators eagerly went into schools in each other's countries to view practices through the prism of prior experience. They discovered, of course, similarities and differences. It is safe to assume that participants now have a much wider perspective from which to consider their own work. The educators found it enlightening both to view and be viewed. What was taken for granted in their own countries took on new meaning in the context of urban schools in another country. The opportunity gave the educators a chance both to affirm and to challenge their own practices.

It was particularly intriguing to discover that many of the educational issues in one country have counterparts in the other. In some cases the United States can learn from England and in other instances England can learn from the United States. Moreover,

there are still other issues on which each country is feeling its way and both can learn together as they inch ahead.

Governance changes and schools of choice, for instance, are being discussed in the United States at the very time that schools in England are already entering into such arrangements. As England implements its new system of national assessment it might be able to avoid some of the pitfalls that have plagued the widespread program of pupil testing in the United States. In each country, schools are trying to come to grips with their role in a society in which growing diversity is causing shifts in the historic moorings of the population.

The experiences of educators on both sides of the Atlantic who participated in the exchange underscore the importance of providing opportunities for teachers and principals to get into other classrooms and other schools. Seeing how colleagues carry out similar tasks is valuable both for validating one's good practices and for persuading one to consider changes in practice. The usual isolation of practitioners undermines education.

Obviously, a teacher's perspective can be broadened simply by visiting a neighboring school in his or her own community. It is not necessary to send educators thousands of miles across the ocean on airplanes for them to be introduced to other practices. The British-American exchange was unusual, but it broadened the view of the participants in ways that would not have occurred had they remained in their home countries. For those who work in urban settings, an international perspective may offer fresh inspiration and promote greater understanding. It may also be a reminder of the universality of some problems.

One lesson that might be drawn from this exchange has to do with the importance of creating mechanisms that will enable teams of educators from individual schools to visit other schools as part of their effort to restructure their own programs. Carried out as they were in the British-American exchange, school visits can be learning experiences

that are vital to the continuing education of teachers and principals at all stages of their careers.

What follows is an attempt to bring together the collective observations of the Americans and offer some implications for practice. The impressions, as described on these pages, were gleaned from summary sheets and diaries that were kept during the visits, as well as from discussions held at a retreat center at the conclusion of the trip and from summations the American educators wrote after returning home.

During their visits to schools, the Americans used forms that had been prepared in advance to organize and systematize their observations. In addition, they had the opportunity to record in open-ended fashion further observations of their choosing. The visitors were also encouraged to write impressions in their diaries each day. Most of the major conclusions emerged by consensus during discussions that were held for this purpose at the retreat center.

But before proceeding to the impressions of the American visitors, it would be well to get an overview of education in England. This, after all, was the context within which the visitors made their observations.

The Organization of English Schools

England's equivalent of local school districts are the 109 local education authorities (LEAs) that are responsible for education throughout the country. Thirteen of these LEAs are in inner London boroughs and 20 in outer London boroughs. The remaining LEAs consist of such Metropolitan Authorities as Liverpool and such County Councils as Hampshire, many of which include cities.

Local authority operating expenditures are funded from four sources—national government grants, a national tax on business, local taxes on individuals, and income from fees and other direct charges. The aim of the finance system is to enable all authorities that levy the same level of local tax to provide a standard level

of service. The national government recognizes that different authorities will incur different costs in providing a standard level of service and therefore the government attempts to achieve equalization through its allocations.

Thus, a major structural difference in education between England and the United States is that the national government in England plays a fundamental role in paying for local education. Furthermore, the national government has wide control over local practices, ranging from teacher salaries to curriculum requirements.

In some ways, the national government's role is more like that of a state government in the United States. One could say there is, more or less, a national school system in England, which, of course, there is not in the United States. Nationally, size is another big difference. England has 6.8 million primary and secondary students in publicly-maintained schools, one-sixth of the American enrollment.

Each individual school in England is run by a governing body that includes parents, teachers, and community people. The law gives some powers and duties specifically to head teachers (principals), and others to governing bodies. Governors have a general responsibility for the effective management of the school, acting within the framework set by national legislation and by the policies of the LEA. But they are not expected to make detailed decisions about the day-to-day running of the school—that is the role of head teacher. Governors answer to the parents and to the LEA for the running of the school.

Under the law, the local management of schools gives the governing body of each school control over the school budget. The funds are allocated to the school by a formula that relies principally on enrollment.

In the spring of each year, joint working groups of local education representatives and local government officials meet to discuss all local funding requirements, including education, for the financial year that is to begin in April of

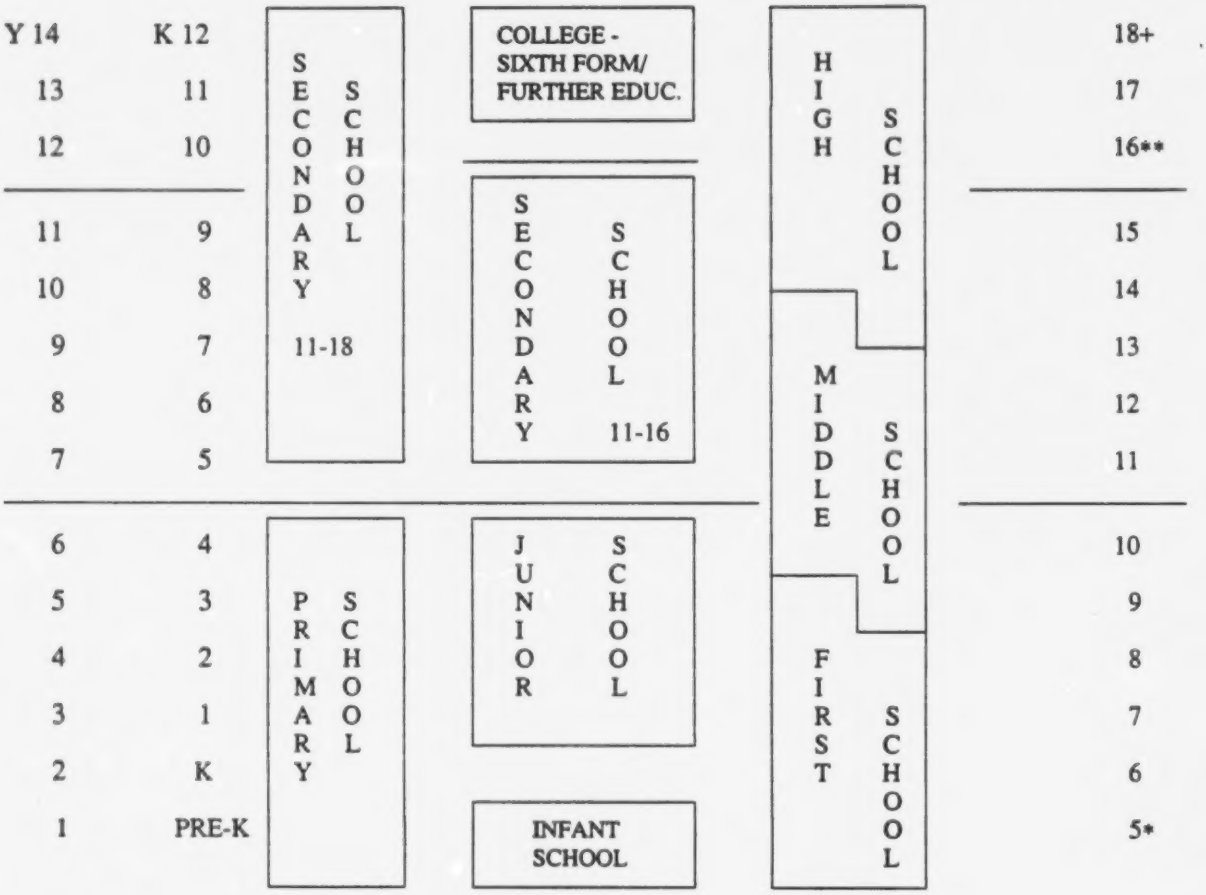
the following year. Reports from all of the localities are sent to the national government which then develops its own proposals for the localities. An expenditure figure, including outlays for education, is offered for each local government in the country. The national government lists the amount of money that will be made available through national allocations to support all local spending. Based on a formula, local officials are then told how much they are expected to raise from local taxes.

Children are required to begin school in England at the age of 5. In some schools, 5 and 6 year olds are grouped separately into a unit known as an infant school. At the age of 7, these children will move into a junior school, where they will usually remain until they reach 11. Sometimes schools serving children younger than 11 are called primary schools or first schools.

Students leave their first school at the ages of 9 or 10 or 11, some going directly to a secondary school and others going to a middle school before entering secondary school. By the age of 14, all attend a secondary school, where they must remain enrolled at least until the age of 16, when it is permissible to leave school. Students who voluntarily remain in secondary education after the age of 16 may stay at the same high school in which they are already enrolled or transfer to what is called a sixth form "college" or further education "college." This is where they complete preparation for post-secondary education or gain more advanced training for the job market.

School Designation of Student Year Group — Student Age

England — USA



* Statutory school age begins (England).

**Statutory school leaving age (England).

The Education Reform Act of 1988 requires that all children follow a National Curriculum, which is just now being implemented. It includes nine foundation subjects, which all students study between the ages of five and 16. Those subjects are English, mathematics, science, technology, history, geography, art, music, and physical education. Study of a modern foreign language begins at age 11. Also, Welsh is a foundation subject in Welsh-speaking schools.

Religious education is already a statutory requirement for all pupils at all ages and it is taught according to the local syllabus. The Education Reform Act has strengthened the position of religious education in the curriculum. At the request of parents, students may abstain from religious education.

It is for schools to decide how the curriculum is to be organized and taught, within the framework of statutory programs of study, attainment targets and assessment arrangements.

What follows are the impressions and findings of the American visitors to the English schools.

The Setting

What a visitor typically encounters upon entering a school building in England is a warm and vital setting that invites the outsider to feel comfortable. In the midst of winter, cut flowers were frequently on display in schools and the gardens around schools were lovingly tended. Vandalism, graffiti and theft were not the major problems that they are in American schools. Almost everywhere, samples of student work hung on walls and were arrayed in cabinets. These displays seemed to convey to students a sense that their work was highly valued.

Schools were diligent in mounting exhibits of all sorts. Hallways and classrooms were filled with posters, pictures, hanging objects and other items that created a panoply of decorative, eye-catching points of interest. Every available space seemed festooned

and adorned. It was as if walls existed only to be covered. A sense that schools were places that were both busy and joyful was immediately conveyed.

At the same time, the Americans could not help but notice that school buildings tended to be meager, cramped and modest, places that often had evidence of shoddy construction even when they were not very old. School libraries tended to be smaller and typically contained fewer books than those in the United States. Yet, school staffs were of good cheer and seemed ready to overlook shortcomings in the physical plant.

It was not unusual to see students sitting in the hall doing their work in a way that indicated that the school building itself was regarded as one sprawling classroom. It grew apparent for the first time to some visitors what the term "open corridors," which was bandied about in the United States 20 years ago, really meant.

The classroom climate was usually warm and informal and most students were unfailingly polite. Seldom was there any sense of hostility. Urban schools had no security personnel, nor did they seem to need any. Problems of the street, to the extent that they existed, did not seem to find their way into the school building.

Respect was given to students and was expected in return. Students almost always addressed teachers as "Miss" or "Sir," seldom adding the teacher's last name. Teachers seemed to know their students well. Frequently, schools had a family atmosphere, often reflecting the approach of the head teacher, the person equivalent to an American principal. The head teacher tended to set the tone. Some heads appeared to know the names of almost all the children they encountered in the school.

There was a sense of "home" at the school for students of all backgrounds. It was obvious in some impoverished neighborhoods that the backgrounds of the students were not regarded as an obstacle that would prevent the school from being positive in its outlook. The uniforms worn by students in some schools added to the strong sense of community. The sight of similarly-clad youngsters conferred a kind of unity that seemed to help bind student to student and student to school.

Underscoring this unity was the good conduct that generally prevailed in schools, regardless of the ages of the students served. Even during the daily recess, which is held in secondary schools as well as primary schools, students behaved well enough that they did not have to be closely supervised. This was a time when the majority of teachers took tea and relaxed in places away from the students.

A visitor's impressions at a primary school serving students in the upper grades underscored the findings of many of the Americans:

> "_____ School, housed in temporary bungalows, situated in a poor neighborhood where abandoned homes with broken out windows and crumbling walls are commonplace, at first appears quite bleak. That is, until you meet the children and staff. Faces are friendly, smiles abundant and suddenly the exterior bleakness becomes unnoticed.
>
> "Here is a school that seems to be working well despite problems of inexperienced staffing, lack of adequate bilingual assistance, isolated classrooms created by the nature of the temporary buildings, and children living in poverty. What makes this school work well? The factors, I think, that contribute positively to the success of this school are unity of vision and leadership that is supportive of staff. Students and parents; a student-centered, activity-based instructional program, and a schoolwide genuine respect for the cultural-linguistic diversity of students and parents."

Lunch was very much a community event in each school as all other activities, including classes, halted and everyone ate at the appointed time. Typically, hot and cold food were served in the all-purpose room that was used at other times during the day for assemblies and physical education. Students were served from large pots of food on rolling carts and they waited in long, orderly lines. There was an emphasis on not wasting food and students took responsibility for cleaning up their places.

The sense of community was strengthened by the Act of Daily Worship, a sort of all-school assembly. The law mandates that the worship must be broadly Christian in character, but frequently this regulation was honored in only the loosest way. It was a

time for inspirational messages, student performances and the building of an esprit de corps.

Usually, students sat on the floor of the all-purpose room and teachers stood or sat on chairs behind them and around the sides. Music was a part of the gathering and students entered and left the room to the strains of an uplifting melody. Because of the religious content, parents have the option of withdrawing their children from participation in the assembly and teachers, too, may choose not to participate.

A visiting American educator at one particular primary school attended the Act of Daily Worship on a day when children filed into the room, class by class, to the rhythm of a Rachmaninoff piece. It was a day following thunder storms that had toppled trees in the schoolyard.

The head teacher showed the children seeds of various trees and brought forth cartons of seedlings. He told of how new life takes hold in the plant world and said that spring would mark a rebirth of trees, shrubbery and flowers. He led the children in a simple prayer: "Dear God, thank you for new life in the trees, the seeds and the flowers." Then he distributed a potted seedling to each class for them to plant. After the attention to nature, a candle was lit and the assembled students sang "Happy Birthday" to a beaming little boy, enjoying a ceremony that presumably was duplicated on the appropriate day for each child in the school. The assembly ended with the class designated by the headmaster as "best behaved" being allowed to lead the others out of the room.

The assembly was not the only vehicle for bolstering community. At one school, serving a violent and terror-filled neighborhood, the headmaster attempted to create an atmosphere of success by organizing the school into teams with which the students could identify. "Positive reinforcement is infused throughout the curriculum as is the notion of education as a continuous process in which students are active and responsible participants," observed a visiting American educator.

Quality/Nature/Substance of Teaching and Learning

Individualization was extensive in the English schools and there was much less whole-class lecturing, especially at the primary level, than that to which most American visitors were accustomed. The approach was child-centered and often experiential. Usually, students sat in groups at tables—desks were seldom seen—working alone and sometimes consulting each other.

Classes, particularly in the lower years, were organized by mixed ability levels, rather than homogeneously. Teachers were coordinators of differentiated learning and they moved around the room, from table to table, from student to student, attempting to guide the process. Most classes, especially in secondary schools, contained students of a single age group, but sometimes in lower schools ages were mixed.

Given the physical arrangement, it seemed that cooperative learning might be widely used, but, in general, this was not the case. Students usually worked alone despite their proximity and few assignments appeared to call for them to collaborate with their neighbors at the table.

Often, it appeared that assignments were leisurely pursued by students with no sense that they felt the pressure of deadlines. Students seemed able to take as long as they wanted to complete their work, even if it meant doing the work for days or weeks. Neither the clock nor the calendar seemed to exert much influence over the pace. Work was regarded as completed when the student deemed it finished, not when some schedule said that it was supposed to be done. Studies were self-paced. In other words, a set amount of work did not have to be completed by each child each day.

At its best, when students worked together, the instructional approach at the primary level was attractive to the American visitors. "Individualization was expected on most tasks, but it was acceptable to discuss and give assistance to someone in your group," noted an American who visited a class of nine and 10 year olds. "Competition among students was non-existent and the room had a supportive and friendly

atmosphere. I did not feel that anyone was working at his/her frustration level, which means that mastery was obtained to complete the assigned tasks."

One factor that perhaps affects the speed with which students move through the curriculum is that no child is held back at the end of the year. The entire class moves along together year by year, each student doing work that is presumably on his level. In lower schools the composition of the class often remains the same, though this is less true in secondary schools. In any event, everyone is promoted and no one is held back, a situation very different from that in American schools.

Students in England who were working at a slower pace were apparently not perceived as trailing anyone. They were seen as simply working at their own speed, which, admittedly, might not be as fast as the pace set by their classmates.

There did not appear to be nearly so much concern about closing the achievement gap among students as there is in the United States. American schools have been notably unsuccessful in narrowing achievement gaps between high performing and low performing students, but nonetheless Americans agonize over the existence of such gaps. The English, in contrast, appeared resigned to the idea that students would end up at different points and this did not seem to be troubling.

In a primary school where a visitor observed a math lesson, she watched as all the students were assigned to pursue the same two pages of problems in a workbook. Some of the children were struggling, barely able to solve even two of the problems. The teacher appeared to take no notice of these students and of the difficulties they were encountering. Her attention was devoted to responding to students who sought her help, which the struggling students did not do.

Visiting American educators did see slower students being remediated, but it did not involve removing them from the class and working with them separately, as occurs so frequently in the United States. Instead, a "support teacher" sat in the class, working with remedial students individually or in small groups while the regular teacher

conducted the lesson. Even as the regular teacher might be conducting a whole-class lesson, the support teacher would sit side-by-side with a student, quietly asking the youngster questions about what the teacher had just said and responding to questions from the student.

Creative approaches were encouraged. Subject matter sometimes arose out of a theme and this might mean weaving a web of interdisciplinary learning to tie together all that took place in the lesson. Other times, however, learning was organized in a subject by subject approach, which British educators predict will become ever more common as a result of the emphasis on individual subjects in the new national curriculum.

In one primary school, a theme around which work was organized for much of the winter was "Journeys." Students read about trips, studied transportation systems in science and solved math problems involving journeys. In crafts, they created needlepoint of trains, boats, planes and balloons.

Visitors to some of the best primary schools said their admiration was so high that they would like to send their own children to those schools. The Americans noted: "They have a sense of good practice and of how to individualize active learning. Interdisciplinary studies are emphasized and work is prepared carefully by the teacher for the specific goal or skill under study. Children's work is treated with respect and the notebooks they write are objects that can be treasured for a lifetime."

Many Americans also were impressed by the role in secondary schools of the form tutor, whose closest counterpart in the United States is the homeroom teacher. The form tutor meets a group of about 25 students once or twice a day for registration, the equivalent to taking attendance in an American school. He or she also assumes responsibility for what is called the personal or social education of the students, that is playing the part of a concerned adult who acts as an informal confessor and advocate.

The number of years that students spend with the same form tutor varies from school to school. The tutor might be with the same group as it passes through each year,

or form, of secondary school or students might have a different form tutor each year. In some cases, the form group and the tutor remain together for the first two or three years of secondary school and then another form tutor takes the group for the remainder of its secondary schooling.

In some classes, a student maintains a weekly diary, focusing on homework, under the supervision of the form tutor. The student lists assignments in each course and discusses his or her progress in completing the assignments with the tutor, who then makes notations into the diary. Each week the student is to show the homework diary to parents and they are to sign it and record their comments. The homework diary is not required by all form tutors and some form tutors were far more diligent than others about having students maintain such a document.

As a result of the paucity of whole-class discussion, students appeared to have few occasions on which to hear what peers thought or to test out their ideas on the rest of the class as a group. When they did speak to the whole class, students tended not to be particularly forthcoming, which might have been a reflection of their lack of experience in such situations. The small amount of whole-class discussion also may have left students less able to judge their progress against that of others because they were less likely to be aware of what other students knew about a given subject.

"One teaching activity that was not represented in my observations was student oral reporting to the entire class," said a visitor who went to eight schools. "I did not see it happening. Only in one case, a special-needs geography class, did the teacher use questioning as a strategy to engage students in whole-class discussion."

When a teacher in a high school sociology course tried to get students to talk about how to choose individual class projects he continually had to improvise in an effort to foment a discussion. When no one would volunteer a question or a remark, he resorted to calling on students by name. Finally, when the students could volunteer no ideas for individual projects, he listed some possibilities.

"I think none of them have ever done an investigation before," he said to a visitor. "They have no experience in searching the literature."

Some visitors returned home wondering about the efficacy of instruction in which they never saw teachers introduce lessons to a whole class. They questioned whether students had a grasp of the work they were supposed to be doing individually. "Seldom did I see a teacher explain a topic or an assignment," said a visitor. Another American visitor said: "The individual work is used excessively, to the detriment of the lower functioning students. The advanced students and students who are self-motivated can work successfully in this environment, but not poorly motivated students or students having difficulty understanding basic concepts."

It was as if some secret, missing ingredient was never revealed to the Americans. The recipe for the mysterious glue that holds together learning in England seemed shrouded in mystery. Or was it simply that the American educators brought too many preconceived notions to the experience? Many of them shall never know. Adding to the enigma were such experiences as this one that a visitor had:

> A dance class I observed was conducted in almost absolute student silence. The pupils—ages 12 and 13—were intent on preparing a dance and worked in groups to plan and develop dances based on specific instructions. It was obvious that teaching had taken place beforehand, and the instructor reviewed fundamentals with the students. The students remained on task with no exceptions and by the end of the class period each group exhibited the dance it had formulated. There was not any lack of attention, although the teacher had remarked to me that this was her 'naughty class.' I cannot imagine such a class occurring in our schools without occasions of disruptive behavior.

It was incumbent upon British teachers to engage in extensive recordkeeping in order to help them tailor assignments to individual students and to monitor the progress of those students, though there was some question in American minds about the extent of monitoring. Students in most classes had individual folders from which they would

draw assignments. One visitor to a primary school saw that the teacher had labeled drawers in which she kept the materials that would be doled out to the students.

In many cases, scant provision seemed to be made for any kind of assessment that might determine how much a student was getting out of the work he or she was spending much of the time doing alone. Learning was assumed, but ostensibly seldom measured in ways that the Americans considered objective. Said an observer:

> "I have difficultly grasping how teachers keep track of the level, activities, further development and time kids spend relative to specific skills and levels in each subject area. When four or more activities are going on in a classroom—each springing from a different discipline—and kids are moving fairly freely from one place to another, how does the teacher determine the quality and quantity of each child's experience?
>
> "How does a teacher increase treatment when the teacher isn't sure about the reality of each child's experience? The anger about testing is easily understood in this environment, but I say that it's time to tie down what's being taught and learned."

In general, there was a lack of standardization in much of what the visiting American visitors saw from classroom to classroom. During the visit, which came in a period preceding the introduction of the national curriculum, there were few assurances that students of the same age studying the same subject would have the same experiences in one classroom as they would have in another. A visitor spoke to a geography teacher who asserted that a national curriculum would impinge on his ability to innovate, while the American argued that "a formal standardization of curriculum is essential so that all students can benefit from an innovative curriculum."

Teachers at their best showed a great deal of concern for the growth of the individual child. Relationships between teachers and students were close. Yet, some observers witnessed in some schools instances in which a teacher would single out a student for criticism and chastise him or her in front of the entire class. Some teachers openly evaluated students in front of peers, showing little sensitivity for the student's

right to privacy. There was a sardonic quality to these incidents. While teaching about South Africa in one elementary school, the teacher—who mostly was lecturing to the students rather than engaging them in a discussion—shamed a child who made a derogatory statement.

Also, some teachers appeared to lack authority. Students grew disruptive—usually mildly so by American standards—and teachers evinced no evidence of paying attention to what was happening in the room. It was as if ignoring the outburst would make it disappear. In some other instances, teachers seemed to have no objectives in mind for the class. These teachers seemed to lack a sense of organization.

There was busy work, too, activities that ostensibly had no purpose except to keep youngsters occupied, not unlike what happens in some American classrooms. When this occurred it seemed especially to involve students for whom the teacher had low expectations. Clearly, there were in some schools, among some teachers, predetermined expectations for students. In such instances, the relationship was strong between expectation and tracking; expectations seemed to affect the experiences that students had in class.

Textbooks were usually simply soft-cover pamphlets and there was extensive use of workbooks and worksheets. Students were to complete one task and then get the sheet pertaining to the next task and continue in sequence.

There appeared in some classes not to be enough textbooks for all students and sometimes—even when there were enough books—students were not able to take home textbooks in connection with assignments. Teachers seemed to worry about the difficulty of replacing books that might be lost.

Policies regarding homework were varied and defied generalization, a situation similar to that in the United States. In one primary school where no homework was assigned the children asked a visiting American educator if students of their age in her school got homework. When she responded affirmatively they then asked her to tell

their teacher to give them homework. Homework, especially in primary schools, apparently is not seen as integral to the teaching mission.

A report on homework by Her Majesty's Inspectors for the Department of Education and Science said that few primary schools had a detailed policy on homework. It noted that some educators wondered about the advisability of imposing homework on students who were already working hard at school. Furthermore, the report stated that at schools of all types policies on homework varied considerably so far as the reasons for having homework; procedures for assigning, collecting, and assessing homework, and time to be spent on homework.

Writing was prized in English classrooms. Great attention was given to entering compositions into exercise books, with students spending much time neatly copying earlier drafts in which they might make only slight changes in the text. Time and again they were printing, not using cursive script. This was particularly surprising in the case of older students, who might have been expected to eschew printing at their age. Americans wondered whether the time invested in neatly printing and preparing exercise books was time well spent.

Students of all ages took great care to enter material in highly legible fashion, giving considerable attention to the quality of the presentation of their work. Rulers were used to draw lines to set off sections and colored pencils were used to draw illustrations that elaborated on what was written. Graphs and maps were drawn into the exercise book where they were thought to further illuminate a topic.

A shortcoming involving the exercise books became apparent to a visitor at one school, where students were entering only the final steps and the answers to math problems. "There was no checking of process, only product," said the visitor.

Also, in making writing assignments teachers seemed to reflect no awareness of the strides that have been made by such efforts as the National Writing Project in the

United States. There was no rehearsal of the process nor talking-through of the assignment in ways that might have helped students.

Disabled students, like those getting remedial help, were incorporated into the classroom rather than educated separately. The theory seemed to be to pull resources into classroom to help the student instead of pulling the student out of the classroom. A "support teacher" frequently joined a disabled student, working with the youngster individually. In a single classroom, it was not unusual for a visitor to see two or three adults in addition to the teacher attending to the needs of students.

One would have to assume that the English did not identify as many students as being in need of special services for the handicapped as the Americans do. Whether this means needs are ignored or that disabled students are more readily accommodated in the mainstream of the school was unclear.

Policies in regard to students of limited-English-speaking proficiency seemed even less defined. Visitors tended not to encounter bilingual classes, but there were instances of support teachers who aided limited-English-speaking students in the classroom in much the same way that they provided help to remedial and disabled students. Also, because of the cluster-seating arrangements, there were numerous instances of other students at the table assisting classmates whose English was not as good as theirs.

American educators noted with interest the role of the support teacher. Often, the support teacher appeared to be a specialist—dealing exclusively with remedial education or exclusively with disabled students or exclusively with limited-English-proficiency students. But teachers in England indicated that increasingly schools are forming unified departments for support services and that support teachers, regardless of their expertise, might be called upon to provide aid in all three areas.

On an entirely separate matter, it was assumed that regular classroom and subject area teachers of students of all ages had a responsibility for counseling, as well as for

teaching students. British schools call this "pastoral" activity and, like pastors, teachers seemed to feel obligated to tend to their flocks. By taking on this responsibility, they appeared to strengthen their bonds with students. The relatively small enrollments of the schools—normally 200 to 400 at the primary level and 750 to 1,000 at the secondary level—made it easier for teachers to fill this role than it might have been in a larger school.

In general, classes in British schools were smaller than those usually found in American schools. Pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools averaged 15.3 to 1, and 22 to 1 in primary schools.

"The high degree of nurturing and caring that the teachers give to the children is exhausting," a visitor said. "Teachers seem to feel that it is their duty to provide the nurturing and caring because it is lacking in the out-of-school environment."

The school day normally began about 9 a.m. and ran to 3:30 or 4 p.m. Most schools that were visited had a morning recess of about 15 or 20 minutes starting sometime between 10:30 and 11. Lunch for the entire school tended to run about an hour and usually began sometime between noon and 12:30. A second recess, a little shorter than the one in the morning, occurred in many schools in the afternoon, generally at about 2:30.

The extensive use of recess, even at secondary schools, indicated an attitude that students should have ample opportunities to expend pent-up energy. At some point during the week, secondary school students would devote more than an hour to "games," which were supervised team competitions in some sport. This would usually mean playing rugby or football (soccer to Americans) on a field adjacent to the school or basketball or volleyball in an indoor "sports hall," (gymnasium to Americans). The interscholastic competition that is so fervidly pursued between schools in the United States was not prominent in England.

Another couple of periods during the week might be given to physical education, which usually involved directed exercises and conditioning routines.

Primary Schools

The visiting educators were charmed by the "nursery" classes for 4 year olds, the youngest group in some of the primary schools. During the year that a child turned 5, he or she would enter a reception class, roughly equivalent to an American kindergarten. Until the age of 7, pupils attended classes collectively regarded as the "infant school"—a designation that endlessly fascinated the Americans, who regarded infanthood as a stage that ended long before entering school. Visitor after visitor was favorably impressed by the caring and loving atmosphere in the infant schools. Activities were child-centered, children were freely praised, classes were small and many and varied materials and equipment, including computers, were available to the tots.

As in American schools, reading was the main educational feature in the early years and, more often than not, a whole-language approach predominated. Reading was done both from real literature and from reading textbooks.

Lessons in math—or as educators in England call it: maths—were, of course, also encountered by many visitors. But work in other subjects was more difficult to distinguish because it tended to be done through "topics," which were of an interdisciplinary nature. A visiting American educator who observed classes in six primary schools never saw a lesson taught specifically in history or geography, for instance, because these subjects were integrated with others. Science, despite its status as a core subject, seemed neglected at the primary level, either as a separate subject or as an interdisciplinary subject, a reminder to the Americans of the insufficient attention that science gets in elementary schools in the United States.

"What struck me," said a visitor, "was the seeming simplicity of the school day with its emphasis in four main areas—reading, mathematics, science, and creative

arts—in an integrated curriculum design which, in fact, encompasses a great deal more than just the four areas. In comparison, elementary teachers at home are responsible for at least 12 discrete subjects and give grades in all those areas. . . . I can imagine that the time needed to create and organize the kinds of classroom environments I've seen thus far is horrendous and represents a lot more commitment to teaching than I've seen at home."

Learning often was applied to real life problems, an approach that seemed to help students more readily make connections between what they were asked to learn and the world around them.

An observer said that the best early childhood classroom he visited was one in which six year olds were being taught about patterns in nature. The children were handling carrots and then leaves, later turnips and cauliflower, making observations about these objects of nature and looking for common patterns. They were encouraged in their inquiry and curiosity. Though informal, the teaching was focused, helping children to concentrate on observable aspects and to think about their observations. The children were gathered in groups, sharing with one another.

A striking example of the self-discipline that the American visitors found among English pupils was evident in a steel band that some of the visitors observed at a primary school, where the children practiced by themselves and kept in time. The visitors said:

> "The children are highly motivated. They practice daily at lunchtime without adult supervision, keeping themselves organized. The group was multiracial, multiethnic, and multiaged. The music was superb—flawlessly performed with great musicality and to a high standard."

A feature of primary schooling that captivated many Americans was the practice of having children strip down to their underwear for physical education. Boys and

girls together, innocently and not outwardly self-conscious about their exposed state, scampered about the all-purpose room playing games or doing exercises with glee. Their regular classroom teachers led them in physical education.

This underscored another feature of the primary school: the paucity of specialists. Whether the subject was physical education, art or music it was generally the classroom teacher who was responsible for instruction.

Some American visitors felt that the absence of expertise by the teachers limited instructional possibilities. Said one visitor: "The art program in elementary schools seemed to emphasize copying or doing representational works. . . . The art program seemed to go nowhere. What I saw 11 year olds doing was essentially no different from what I saw five and six year olds doing."

The high degree of collegiality among English teachers was particularly evident in primary schools such as one at which visitors felt that the head teacher had encouraged the staff to articulate a schoolwide vision, to build curriculum together, and to prepare their own materials tailored to the individual needs of their students. Said the visitors:

> "Each staff member is a member of a curriculum group and they are all agents for change. Each week a cabinet meets to discuss curricular and peer management issues. The outcomes are fed back to the staff, opinions are sought, and they are brought back to the cabinet. There is no built-in time for this process, but most staff members put in many hours preparing the work. The school has successfully integrated a wide range of potentially difficult students who appear to be productive and happy in school. The teachers have a sense of good practice and of how to individualize learning.
>
> "Interdisciplinary studies are emphasized and work is prepared carefully by the teacher for the specific goal or skill under study. Children's work is treated with respect and their exercise books are objects that can be treasured for a lifetime."

Secondary Schools

Students in English secondary schools seemed more sedate and perhaps even less mature than those of the same age in the United States. They were more accepting of authority and better disciplined. There was not the outward hostility that one finds in some American urban schools. The English students had an aura more typical of a younger group in the United States.

Whole-class lessons were taught more frequently in secondary schools than in elementary schools, but, by American standards, such lessons still were few and far between. More typically, students worked on their own. Though they sat in groups, they usually worked independently, as in primary schools. They were free to chat or ask questions of each other. As a result, in some classes there was a steady din, though order seldom broke down.

Students in a group sometimes collaborated, working together in what Americans know as cooperative learning, though this did not occur as frequently as might have been expected given the fact that they were arranged in groups. Teachers often functioned as coaches, circulating from student to student and interacting briefly with each. But observers felt that in some instances teachers did not seem to interact very extensively with the students and the observers wondered just how much instruction was occurring. Conversations with secondary school teachers in England indicated that they were concerned that they would lose the personal touch as schools grow larger.

In many instances, it seemed that it would have been profitable for the teacher to take a few minutes to launch into an explanation to the entire class, but this seldom happened. Students were left on their own to an extraordinary degree and it was difficult, if not impossible, to know the extent to which they understood what they were doing, though perhaps over the course of an entire school term this might become evident.

Integrated teaching was evident in mathematics and, often, in science, as well. At the secondary school level the unified curriculum does not provide for separate courses in algebra, geometry and other mathematical subjects. In science, integration of subject matter is more commonly restricted to the first three years of secondary school and then students are apt to study biology, chemistry and physics as separate subjects. One visitor had some reservations:

> "The integrated approach is interesting, but seems a little difficult to manage. In one school several teachers taught their speciality to students on a rotating basis. For example, the physics teacher would teach physics to a part of the form for 10 weeks and then rotate to another one of the four bands. He and his colleagues would, therefore, each teach the students at the first three age levels—ages 11, 12, and 13. The staff member with the greatest expertise in each area would teach his/her specialty. That makes sense. What I question is proceeding to the next subject, assuming—or not caring about—mastery with no way of reinforcement or review."

At a secondary school where the teachers were especially candid, a visitor inferred that one of the biggest problems connected with the low achievement that was endemic in that particular school was that most of the students had not been academically challenged at any point in their schooling. The teachers offered various comments about the students:

"They struggle with the skills of analysis and evaluation—even the bright ones."

"They come to us with very little science."

"Most of the schools they attended did little science with them except for the odd visit to a nature park."

"They don't know much history because there has been too much repetitiveness. The Renaissance has been flogged to death."

The reading of the students, the teachers agreed, was "well shifted to the lower side."

This particular secondary school tried to reach entering students with what it called a Foundation Course, assigning a group of students to a single teacher who would teach the youngsters most of their courses, not unlike the practice in primary school. The intent was to ease the transition into secondary school by providing a nurturing climate in which students could get to know one teacher and the teacher could get to know them.

The heterogeneous grouping that characterizes primary education in England continues into the first year of secondary school, but the visitors saw a tendency for homogeneous grouping to develop as students move through their secondary education. What is called "setting" occurs as students frequently are divided into groups to take courses—with a highest group, a lowest group and other students in in-between groups. It is possible for a student to be with a group on one level for one course and join a group on a different level for another course. Assignments to groups reflect teacher judgment or other considerations, but not test results.

A visitor reported on her experience in a class of 15 year olds in one of the lower sets. It was a class to which 14 students were assigned, though the teacher said he had never seen four of the students. Some of the students were not behaving, though this teacher, like many others, seemed not to take note of the disruption.

The students were engaged in what appeared to be fairly low level work. One of their assignments in science, after listening to each others' hearts through stethoscopes, was to draw pictures of the stethoscopes. It was an exercise that seemed designed more to keep them occupied than to enhance their understanding of scientific phenomena. There was no lecture by the teacher, no whole-class discussion—nothing that seemed likely to promote their scientific thinking.

This would probably be the last year of formal schooling for about half of the students, according to the teacher. Attendance is not required beyond the edge of 16. Limited access to higher education seemed to be taken for granted. Older students

pursued the work for the examinations that would determine their educational future seemingly without a sense of anxiety about the fact that lack of success would foreclose certain possibilities for them.

From the fourth year of secondary school onward, beginning at the age of 14, schooling is tied directly to preparation for examinations, starting with the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The English feel that it is more a matter of the curriculum driving the test, rather than the test driving the curriculum. After devising a syllabus that dictates what should be taught to these upper-level secondary students, the examinations are fashioned to respond to the curriculum. Students spend considerable amounts of their time at this point in their education in independent study, following the syllabus and preparing for the examinations. The course work by 14 and 15 year olds is part of the examination and helps determine the score, along with a written examination at the end.

The GCSE, therefore, is a combined instructional and examination system using national criteria with which all syllabi and examinations in each school must comply. Teachers' marking of course work is moderated by outside examining groups that strive to ensure uniform standards of marking. (Remember: These are not multiple-choice, norm-referenced exams.).

Successful GCSE candidates are awarded a grade on a seven point scale, from A to G, something like the Advanced Placement scoring in the United States. Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standards for grade G go ungraded. They do not receive a certificate.

GCSE aims to test whether candidates <u>understand</u> what they have been taught and can <u>apply</u> it to the <u>everyday</u> world. The courses seek to encourage the development of practical and oral skills.

Education in England for the 16-19 Age Group

The portion of students electing to "stay on" in school after the age of 16 has risen in recent years to about half of the age group, but within any local education authority the "staying-on rate" may be much higher or much lower than this. Programs of study after 16 may last one, two or even three years and may be either academic or vocational.

One-year academic programs starting at 16 often aim to improve students' attainment in GCSE examinations but the success rate in such courses is low.

Students entering two-year programs at the age of 16 are usually required to have gained a higher grade (A, B, or C) in at least four subjects in GCSE examinations. About 30 percent of the 16 year olds reach this level of attainment. The two-year academic programs usually lead to the examinations of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) at Advanced ("A") level. Students take two or three and sometimes four subjects—each leading to an examination. Some specialize in the way that a graduate student does in the United States. The student may carry only three courses and all three might be only in science or two of the three in math. Depth is preferred to breadth, raising some interesting questions in the minds of Americans who felt that many of their own students get an education that is a mile wide and an inch deep.

Candidates may take examinations on as many occasions as they wish. Examinations are administered by outside examination boards, whose syllabuses and procedures are subject to scrutiny by the Secondary Examinations and Assessment Council. A-level examinations, usually taken at the age of 18, are widely regarded as setting recognized academic standards and many students go on to higher education or gain entry for professional training.

Vocational programs, pursued by other 16 year olds, lead to the examinations of a large number of bodies including the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) and the Royal Society of Arts

(RSA). Some of these qualifications are recognized for entry to higher education but more usually they lead to employment.

One-year vocational programs qualify students for further courses or employment. In order to take a vocational program students usually need to transfer to a "college of further education" (CFE). These colleges provide academic programs also.

Those leaving full-time education at 16 may enter employment or, where unemployment is high, join an occupational training program. Schools are not required to provide job training and some young people have no opportunity to gain qualifications to be hired.

Overall, once a person reaches 16, the system is complex and the complexity itself may deter some young people from "staying on." Moves are afoot to streamline the vocational system and make training more widespread, to broaden programs of academic study and to identify a "core curriculum" which may be common to both academic and vocational courses. In the future it may be easier for young people to blend academic and vocational qualifications and to use either or both to progress to employment or further study.

An American visitor to one high school talked with a small group of students who had stayed on after 16 and asked them why they thought that fellow students had left school. This was a school of some 900 students in a working-class neighborhood where an estimated 20 percent of the fathers were unemployed because the economy had shifted and former employers had closed down their businesses. The students said of the school-leavers:

"Many of them lacked confidence that they could do the schoolwork."

"They wanted to make money."

"They were tired of school."

"Their parents may have needed them at home."

"They have wanted more independence than there is in school."

There appeared to be a tendency in white, working-class schools to hide interest in education and in achievement. Said one teacher, speaking of those who "stayed on": "A potential achiever must be strong willed. He could be subject to ridicule. We chaperone them and provide them with a haven from the others. There are instances of the others destroying the folders of the achievers on the way to and from school."

Some Americans theorized that what the English needed in order to hold more students in school was a better system of vocational education that was linked more closely to academics. A visiting educator familiar with a high school magnet program in the United States to teach students about travel and tourism drew comparisons with what she saw in a program for students in England. The American program was embedded in an academic high school, she said, so that, along with the occupationally-oriented courses, students got college preparatory courses and were encouraged to pursue higher education after completing high school. She said, however, that most of the students she saw in the English program "proceed from school to work, usually at low paying entry-level positions" and were not encouraged to get a higher education.

One effort at improvement is the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). It is intended for secondary students from 14 to 18 across the whole ability range. Courses are developed by individual LEAs and schools, providing information technology, careers guidance and counseling, and work experience. The principal aim of TVEI was to stimulate curriculum development and introduce new approaches to learning. Essentially, TVEI is a four-year curriculum with vocational, technical, and academic elements.

The national government has also fostered the creation of a small network of City Technology Colleges (CTCs), which despite their name are secondary schools. These

institutions, mostly situated in urban areas, offer a broad curriculum with a strong technical and practical element. Local business and industry are also expected to help finance these schools by supplementing funds received from the government. City Technology Colleges are required, in turn, to admit pupils representing a wide range of abilities.

A student who continues in academic work after 16 might remain at the secondary school he had attended until then or might go to a totally separate institution called a sixth form college. This is not a college in the American sense, but actually an institution devoted solely to the very oldest secondary students. Educators said that one value of a separate sixth form college is that it ensures that the older students are separated from younger, less devoted students whose influence might undermine their sense of purpose.

At one sixth form program, a visitor found a physics class in which 14 students were working individually on A-Level assignments. The students were building projects and conducting tests. Among the projects were a machine to serve tennis balls at varying rates of speed, a cradle that was to rock when triggered by the sound of a baby's cry, an automated window opener operated by a room's temperature and humidity, a clock driven by water and an electronic door opener for use by the disabled.

The visitor judged the work as comparable to that done by American college students. The students spent one and a half hours in a laboratory three times a week and otherwise were on their own, consulting the teacher as they saw fit. The teacher said that the students were graded on their thinking, the depth of their exploration and their use of the equipment. He said that he looked for evidence that they thoroughly explored the subject and that he did not confine his evaluation simply to the final product.

In an A-Level history course at a sixth form college, students were preparing for an examination that would consist of two tests of three hours each. Each examination would call for writing four essays and there would be no multiple-choice or short-answer questions. On this particular day, the teacher was returning homework papers and,

without hesitation, he was chiding the students for their deficiencies. "There was no attempt to keep students from being embarrassed," observed an American educator. "What was poor and weak he stated in no uncertain terms."

The teacher immediately assigned a new topic. Students wer to develop a formal argument that expanded on the theory that the foreign policy of Louis XIV was a complete success. The teacher gave them examples of quotations and evidence that they might cite. "Obviously," the American visitor noted, "a great deal of reading and remembering must be done to pass an A-Level exam. Students must be literate and able to take copious notes." Another American visitor, viewing the same class, said that what he saw reminded him of a course to prepare students in New York State for a Regents examination.

Assessment/Accountability

Techniques for assessment varied. They included portfolios, self-assessment and peer assessment, student evaluation of lessons, teacher judgment, such national examinations as the GCSE and A-Levels and, on occasion, IQ tests. Standardized, norm-referenced reading and math tests were seldom used. Whatever is said about assessment, however, must be tempered by the fact that English schools are in the midst of great change and an extensive system of national assessment is to be implemented in conjunction with the new curriculum. Visitors almost never saw a class taking the sort of multiple-choice tests with which Americans are familiar.

Some schools periodically gave students report cards with formal marks. There appeared to be little consistency from school to school on marking practices. Individual teachers in the same school might use number grades, letters or percentages in assessing student work. Generally, however, a school report was issued for each student at least annually. This report, often on just a single sheet of paper, listed the student's subjects with a comment from the teacher in each subject, sometimes accompanied by

some sort of mark, as well. In some schools, the School Report might take the form of a small booklet containing a separate sheet for each subject. The point in year at which the School Report was issued varied from school to school. Marks for effort and motivation were apt to be included. In addition, the School Report contained some overarching observations by the form tutor.

In secondary schools, the Record of Achievement (ROA), a cumulative collection of information on a student's progress, is kept in a ring-binder that keeps growing thicker. The ROA became ever more popular in the 1980s as a way of allowing students to show evidence of accomplishment and as a vehicle for reporting to parents. This sort of record is of particular importance to the many students who are not headed for further academic work and do not have scores to show from the university-oriented examinations.

School records, certificates, letters of testimony and other documents in an ROA provide evidence of course work and related experiences, as well as narrative summaries of achievement. Comments might even be included from adults who supervised the student in out-of-school internships or in community service at charity organizations. A student would very likely take the ROA to a job interview or to an interview to gain admission to a job training program.

Now, with the changes under the Education Reform Act, the ROA will include reports on performance in the subjects mandated in the national curriculum, as well as results on the accompanying examinations. Increasingly, a version of the ROA is being used in the lower grades.

Portfolios are integral to student assessment in England. A typical portfolio for students in English in one high school, according to the teacher, consisted of 10 pieces written during two years, including poems, a play, a novelette and several examples of persuasive writing. Among the items that some students might write and include in their portfolios were short stories, letters, diaries and pieces of nonfiction written in

journalistic style. In one class some students were adapting scenes from Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* into radio scripts, an assignment that forced them to write dialogue.

Important to the record-keeping were the exercise books that each student maintained. These books contained much of the work that students did in carrying out their assignments. Themes were written on these pages, mathematics problems were solved, geography lessons were recorded, scientific observations were noted.

American visitors wondered, however, about the thoroughness of the evaluation system. "I question the rigor with which assessment techniques are used, at least until students begin to concentrate on the GCSE preparation," one visitor said. Other Americans worried that the teachers did not seem really to know how far along students were. "I wonder if a lot of English kids go through the motions and master little," said a visiting American teacher. In one secondary school that had used norm-referenced testing, at least 80 percent of the students scored below the 40th percentile. The conclusion was one that could have been drawn in many American schools.

A few months after the American educators visited the English classrooms a controversy erupted in England over reading achievement. It was based on a report by a group of educational psychologists on the results of reading tests they had administered to students in a range of schools including some serving disadvantaged and minority students. Education experts around the country began debating—in tones not unfamiliar to those who follow achievement issues in American schools—whether there was a decline in reading achievement. Soon the argument revolved around whether or not phonics instruction had been abandoned to the detriment of the teaching of reading, another debate not unlike that in the United States.

Equity/Access

Examples of multicultural education were seen in many schools. Sometimes, there was extensive integration of cultures and languages into the curriculum. There were also efforts in some schools to help students maintain their mother tongues. Signs in the native language of the students appeared throughout some school buildings and some students dressed regularly in their national attire. Displays in such schools often were devoted to themes dealing with the cultural origin of the students.

Visitors to one school were greeted by welcoming signs in 24 languages. The enrollment was 53 percent white, 40 percent Asian and 7 percent Afro-Caribbean. Students wore such traditional articles as head coverings and rings through their nostrils. Children studying English as a second language were encouraged to prepare work in their native languages after doing it in English. Students who were more advanced in the English language frequently helped other students who were less proficient in the English, translating for them and giving them tips as the teacher spoke.

Evidence of sensitivity to various cultures tended, however, to be limited largely to schools with significant enrollments of students from non-British cultures. Multicultural education was less common in overwhelmingly white schools. At a secondary school with no minority students, a visitor observed that "little effort was being made to teach students about the diversity that exists in the world."

In some of these schools, rhetoric attested to the need for such approach, but there was not significant follow-through in practice. There were such exceptions as the virtually all-white, working-class secondary school in which students in an English class were studying the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was not simply a matter of excluding study of the heritage of minority students, but of focusing narrowly on things British to the exclusion of all else. A visiting American educator encountered a series of exhibits that conveyed this attitude. There was an display on the history of electricity that omitted mention of

Thomas Edison, one on the history of aviation that omitted the Wright Brothers and one on the history of photography that left out George Eastman.

Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act, which is being revised, was enacted to provide services for disadvantaged members of minority groups. Referred to simply as Section 11, the main impact of the law on schools has been to pay for education in English as a Second Language. Some Afro-Caribbeans, whose native tongue is English, said they felt slighted because attempts to use the law to gain funds for other sorts of multicultural educational purposes were thwarted.

Sexism was evident in some schools where expectations differed for males and females. For example, boys were given more attention by teachers, while girls might be more likely than boys to be berated for not knowing something in some classes. Attitudes of the religious groups to which some of the students belonged also sometimes reinforced sexism by failing to give girls encouragement in their home communities for wanting to learn and persist in school. Heads of some secondary schools spoke of Muslim girls who had to move out of their parents' homes and live with other families in order to continue attending school, which their fathers didn't want them to do.

Males predominated as the heads of the schools that were visited and school governing boards that the Americans observed were made up predominantly of men.

A lack of sensitivity to race was noted by some American visitors in schools where uniqueness was not valued. The terms "black" and "colored" were used to describe anyone who was not white, often regardless of the person's origins.

There were few role models for minority students in schools because of the low number of minority teachers and heads. In many schools with substantial minority enrollments, including some where minority children made up almost the entire student body, there were few Asian or black teachers. Said a visiting American educator: "After waiting so long to visit the London school system, I'm sorry to report that my most

memorable recollections are negative ones. They are recollections of insensitivity and rejections faced by minorities and the handicapped."

Data collection by race and ethnic origin, which might have helped document these situations seemed nonexistent. Affirmative action plans of the sort used in the United States seemed to be virtually unknown. In one London borough with a majority of black students, a controversy arose over a proposal to engage in preferential hiring to increase the portion of black teachers. A teachers' union threatened to boycott the school, according to the Times Educational Supplement.

On the other hand, some teachers in some schools had attended workshops and conferences to discuss and learn about issues involving student diversity. The heads, the teachers and the students in some schools evinced sensitivity to the needs of education in a multicultural setting. There were instances in which this was reflected in the curriculum, as well.

Religious differences are apparently a source of growing unease in English schools, where students of non-Christian backgrounds are forming a larger and larger portion of the enrollment. Visiting Americans, whose own state-supported schools must be assiduously nonsectarian, were struck by the fact that the law mandates that schools in England must offer daily worship and religious education. Many of the schools that were visited attempted to show sensitivity to a diversity of religious faiths, but it was clear that this path was not negotiated with ease.

Some people in England, both Christian and non-Christian, are propounding the view that state schools might be better off without daily worship. Not unexpectedly, this position raises hackles. Some traditionalists see any change away from the Christian orientation as undermining the foundation of society. Some non-Christians have no objection to religious expression in state schools—so long as it would reflect their own religion.

Non-Christians told of sometimes having to compromise their religious heritage in order to get ahead in their education. There is a dispute in England , to some extent echoing the one in the United States, over the extent to which schools should be melting pots or places of cultural preservation. The cultural clash was illustrated for many visitors when they watched students in schools with non-Christian majorities go through the motions of complying with the mandate of the daily act of worship.

Social class seemed to figure into many situations at schools. The working-class status of students frequently was a factor in expectations, attribution of ability, performance and aspiration of students. Students of working-class background, which includes large numbers of whites, often did not envision higher education as a goal for themselves. They did not consider it negative to leave the education system at the age of 16. Moreover, they seemed resigned to the prospect of a spotty economic future.

"Most of these children expect to be unemployed," said an administrator at a large secondary school in a depressed area with an enrollment that was almost entirely white. "Their parents are unemployed, their neighbors are unemployed and the children have no motivation."

Like their counterparts in the United States, many poor and urban students in England were isolated in the sense that little had happened to expand their personal horizons. They had difficulty thinking in terms of larger educational aspirations, just as they could not easily imagine life beyond the narrow confines of their own neighborhoods. One secondary school tried to counteract this situation by taking its students to visit the campus of a local polytechnic or to a retreat site in the country. Sometimes older students were even taken to restaurants.

"Some of these students live in homes where there isn't even a table at which family members sit down to a meal," said a school administrator. "Some have no experience in engaging in conversation with an adult over a meal. Taking them to lunch

is important so they don't just eat out of compartmentalized plastic trays at school. They need real eating experiences."

Expectations sometimes seemed to be conditioned by race, as well as class. A teacher said of his black students that he would be satisfied "just teach them how to behave." At another school, however, teachers made it clear that they had expectations of achievement for all students.

Despite the heterogeneous grouping in the primary years, students by the last years of secondary school seem often to be in situations in which they are grouped by ability. Some students got work that was challenging and others did not. It seemed to the visitors that more was expected of some students than of others.

The entire system of primary and secondary education operated with an awareness of the limited access to universities. Some students gave no thought whatsoever to schooling beyond the age of 16, but some others who thought about the possibility had their enthusiasm dampened by the powerful influence of the examination system. Starting at the age of 14, students were sorted and the examinations left few questions about who would get into a university and who would not.

Said one visitor:

> The failure of secondary schools in changing the lives of disadvantaged students appears to be a significant problem. It is common knowledge that students at certain schools will not break the poverty cycle, that, in fact, they are headed nowhere. However, the education delivery continues as usual for these students. . . Something appears to happen at the secondary level which causes poor and minority students to turn their interests away from school. Social problems among the poor are the same as one would find at home—teen-age pregnancy, drugs and crime. The problems in some schools seem to be overwhelming. However, the doom doesn't appear to be as heavy as in the United States.

Teachers

Morale among teachers was low and some of the reasons were readily apparent. Many teachers worked in buildings that were in shoddy condition, places where poor maintenance exacerbated the dismal physical settings. Some of these buildings were constructed as recently as the 1960s and 1970s, but there was evidence of inferior workmanship—crumbling walls, windows that had shifted in their frames, cracked foundations and paneling that was broken or chipped.

Feelings of powerlessness were widespread among teachers. The fact that their potential strength was fractured by membership in several competing unions seemed to leave them without a sense of unity. Furthermore, the national government had taken away the right of teacher unions to bargain for salaries.

Some teachers felt disenfranchised, even in the classroom. They said that the national government's mandates for change were being imposed without any input from teachers. The teachers appeared anxious over the amount of impending change and the rapidity with which it was to occur. The governance changes brought on by the Education Reform Act added new uncertainties in terms of employment. New guidelines for funding local schools—containing language about "compulsory redundancies"—are making teachers in some locales uneasy about job security, which has seldom before been threatened.

Also, teachers considered the reward incentives unequal to the work expected of them. Some teachers felt little motivation to excel because incompetent staff members were not dealt with. One of the American visitors, a very active member of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, took special interest in the conditions of teachers. He said:

> "Teachers spoke to me of a loss of public esteem, the lack of self-esteem, and the low regard they are held in by the public. They complain of poor working conditions and the lack of time to devote to professional development on school time. The nominal teacher day is 9 a.m. to 4

> p.m., but teachers often stay longer. Pay is low and there is perceived to be little room for advancement. The teacher union movement is divided and teachers are dispirited after losing a long strike.
>
> "Pay is determined by the national government without collective bargaining. . . . However, one advantage teachers have is the ability to leave jobs at will and accept employment anywhere in England without loss of their salary or pension rights. This mobility does not exist in the United States since teachers cannot take the rights mentioned above out of their states or, in some cases, particularly salary, within their states."

Visiting Americans saw almost no examples of teacher evaluation. British teachers apparently are not accustomed to having anyone observe and assess their teaching after their first year of teaching. The national government a few years ago called for a system of "teacher appraisal" and funded pilot projects, but so far the action has gone no further except in localities that choose to engage in some kind of appraisal. Very recently, however, the national government has announced its intention to introduce a mandatory system of teacher appraisal.

In many of the schools visited by the American educators, teachers worked under the provisions of precisely-worded job descriptions that specified exactly how their time could be used. There were specifications for time to meet with parents, monthly staff meetings, group meetings of teachers teaching the same age group and area meetings every other week with teachers from other schools—all of which was to be accomplished in 1,265 hours a year.

Paradoxically, despite the many factors that depressed morale, teachers often demonstrated high levels of commitment to their chosen field. They seemed ready to extend themselves, whenever needed. In some cases, they appeared to be inspired by the head teacher. Many teachers believed that teachers could make a difference in the education of city youngsters.

Sometimes visitors encountered teachers who were offering extra services without pay. For example, a physical education teacher who returned to school two nights a week to lead a sports program that was open to the community got no compensation for

this work. Said the visitor: "The U.K. must learn to appreciate its dedicated faculty with something more tangible than praise."

There was a great deal of collegiality among members of school staffs. The Americans visited schools in which teachers took enormous pride. Support within staff for collaboration was extensive; people trusted each other. And there was considerable bonding between teachers and students. At a school serving children from ages seven through 11, visitors described the staff as a team. The visitors noted:

> "The whole school plans a carefully articulated curriculum together, under the guidance of the head and the teacher representative team. New teachers are supported by the staff."

One example of the efforts put forth by teachers was seen in a school where it was the practice of the faculty to meet as a group each morning, if only for a few minutes. Each session was punctuated by a pep talk by the head teacher, which seemed well received by the rest of the teachers. Then, coffee or tea cup in hand, each faculty member would march off in good cheer to face the daily challenges. This strong esprit de corps was maintained despite the deteriorating conditions of the building, where teachers were struggling to compensate for the loss of the science laboratories to fire just months earlier.

Professional growth was promoted by the existence of some outstanding teacher development centers. Much training took place within schools. Staff consultants in schools were paid from internal and external sources. However, some of the staff development was imposed without teacher needs or desires being taken into consideration.

Money has apparently been increasingly targeted for specific kinds of activities for staff development in recent years, according to English educators. Some of the inservice priorities are set by the national government and some are set by the schools and the

local education authorities. At one time teachers apparently had more latitude in deciding what programs they would pursue in their personal development, but now the activities are mostly shaped by curricular and institutional needs. More English teachers say they are participating in staff development today than in former years.

Nonetheless, some visitors thought that support for professional development was not strong enough. A visitor to a teacher center noted that materials for teachers were in short supply and that there did not seem to be abundant opportunities for enrichment. "In our system," she said, "materials are displayed, curricula are catalogued and available and video tapes and films are provided."

Teacher shortages, which for a time were limited mostly to London and other big cities, now seem to be affecting schools in various parts of England. The outlook for attracting large numbers of new teachers is not good because the number of graduates of institutions of higher education who want to teach is declining, not growing. The country has 365,000 primary and secondary schools. Teachers have been recruited from spots as distant as Bangladesh and the United States, as well as from throughout Europe, particularly for shortages in science, math, foreign languages, and technology. The impact of such shortages is two-fold because of the difficulty in most places in finding "supply teachers," as substitutes are called.

Supervision

In many cases, in both lower and upper schools, the climate owed much to the influence of the school head. Visiting American educators were usually able to gauge the atmosphere after only a short time in the building. The personality of the head seemed instrumental in shaping the mood in the school.

In one case, for instance, a visitor—herself a secondary school principal—quickly found that a positive learning climate existed in the school. The head, she said, was a person who was generous in expressing his appreciation for the cooperation of his staff.

At the same time, the visitor found that the head was "very critical, first of himself, and also of his peers."

In English schools, there did not seem to be the division between administration and teachers that is often found in American schools. Administrators in the United States leave teaching behind in a way that most do not in England. Instead of being called "principal," those in charge of English schools are called "head teachers." The title signifies a world of difference. A head teacher, according to experts, might be in the classroom teaching up to 20 percent of the time at the primary level and up to 10 percent of the time at the secondary level. These are averages, of course, and time in the classroom may vary greatly from school to school.

In any event, the relationship between heads and teachers revolves very much around a mutual understanding of classroom issues. There is less potential for an us-and-them attitude to develop. It is worth noting in this connection that for the many American principals who take seriously the responsibility of instructional leadership it may well be the structure and obligations of the principalship—not their lack of willingness—that prevent taking on teaching.

There is some concern that head teachers in English schools are becoming too much like the nonteaching principals in American schools. "They are spending increasing amounts of time on managing schools and less time on teaching," said an American visitor. "I feel this is unfortunate because I found head teachers to be refreshingly knowledgeable and caring about the instructional program in schools, much more than in my home school district. They seemed to care about the actual workings of classrooms and made time to visit and teach."

Current developments in English schools seem, at the very same time, to be weakening and strengthening the role of the head teacher. The move in the direction of site-based management is allowing heads to make decisions on a range of issues that were formerly beyond their province. But heads say that under local

management of schools they are also more apt to be held accountable for management tasks than formerly.

The secondary schools that were visited had deputy head teachers, but some of the primary schools did not. Visitors encountered some overworked head teachers in primary schools who had virtually no one to whom they could delegate responsibilities. Even in schools with deputy heads those holding this title almost never were full-time administrators as assistant principals are in the United States. In fact, in a primary school it was not unusual for a deputy head teacher to have a full-time teaching load and to perform administrative tasks on the side. Deputies in secondary schools almost always had less than full-time teaching assignments.

Some other teachers in the schools also performed administrative tasks and were paid extra for those duties. For instance, a teacher heading an academic department or having responsibility for overseeing pastoral care might get added pay. Also, teachers called "year group heads" were in charge of each year group and might have reduced teaching loads to carry out their work.

Analogous to the members of administrative units in the United States who provide schools with support services from the outside were the advisory teachers who were sent into schools by the local educational authorities. These men and women worked with teachers on specific academic subjects or on instructional issues that spanned the subjects as, for instance, writing across the curriculum.

Governance/Management

The shift to local management of schools engendered feelings of ambiguity and caused stress. Teachers and heads felt uncertain about their positions and about the future availability of resources. They were concerned that the flexibility that had been introduced for the allocation of funds could jeopardize reasonable levels of support.

Furthermore, competition for students put pressure on schools to improve--at least so far as how the school was perceived by parents. If students transfer to another school, as they are now able to do, their former schools will have to cope with smaller enrollments and will receive less money. As a result, money was being shifted from educational programs to marketing. This move was seen as an investment in the future, an effort to assure continued existence for the school. Some schools were stretching their funds to the extent that they lacked money for trips and other activities.

As the schools tried to recast themselves in ways that would attract families, there seemed to be a belief that parents would find it appealing if students wore uniforms and various trappings of tradition were added.

The enlarged authority of the governing bodies under the new law seemed to put heads of schools in a delicate position. Heads appeared to be in charge only as long as they had the support of the governing body. Given their limited power, teachers appeared under pressure to make a case for anything they wanted to see happen. Much seemed to depend on the strength and personality of heads. Whether the heads, in turn, relied on the teachers as colleagues depended on the leadership style of the heads.

Education is managed in England without the sort of huge statistical base that has become as integral to schooling in the United States as books and notepads. For the most part, the schools that were visited—and even the offices of the local educational authorities—did not have mountains of data to document their efforts. No one, in fact, seemed to be responsible for data collection in some places and queries about educational statistics were dismissed with little explanation.

One result of this difference between English and American schools is that the constant comparisons of pupils, of schools and of districts that is so much a part of the educational scene in the United States was absent. Clearly there are advantages to resisting comparisons, but it made many of the visiting American educators uneasy and uncertain about what they were observing.

Pupil transportation, which is so much on the minds of those who govern schools in the United States, is less of an issue in England, where it is generally the responsibility of the family to get pupils to and from school. Rural schools, which were not visited by the Americans, provide transportation for students who must travel long distances and there is some organized transportation throughout the country for disabled students. Furthermore, not having mandatory pupil assignments for racial desegregation, English schools are without this additional impetus for providing transportation.

Partisan politics seemed to impinge upon educational considerations in England to an extent unfamiliar to most of the American educators. The influence of the city council never seemed distant, though some English educators said that pressures were lessening as the representation and influence of politicians on governing bodies was being reduced. The extensive involvement of the national government in mandating change added to the sense that education was very much under the scrutiny—and even the control—of politicians.

Parents/External Influences

Parents were encountered infrequently in the schools that the Americans visited. Parental involvement in the on-going life of the school did not seem to be part of the ordinary school day. There were exceptions, though. At one infant school, observers saw many of the parents arriving with their children and remaining in the classroom for up to an hour or more. Some of the parents read to children or helped them with their work and other parents simply remained available, easing the transition between school and home for the youngsters.

It was clear in the urban schools that were visited that many of the same social impediments involving the home that affect the schooling of students in the United States have an impact on schools in English cities. Many of the visitors had the chance to tour

the neighborhoods served by the schools and saw first-hand the conditions of poverty in which students lived.

Conversations with teachers and with students revealed that many students had low aspirations and could not imagine themselves pursuing education beyond the age of 16. Some British educators said that the parents of many students had negative experiences in school and, consequently, did not expect the schools to deliver much to their children.

A secondary school at which few parents showed up to receive reports on their children found it could reach more parents by holding parents' evenings at primary schools, closer to where the families live. That way the parents of one out of five students came in for reports, a marked improvement. A problem, according to a teacher at one school, was that the parents, who are largely disaffected from society, "don't think we have anything to offer their children."

The kinds of parent enabling programs that schools are starting to develop in the United States were not in evidence in urban schools in England. The connection of parents to the schools seemed limited largely to the once or twice a year when there was an evening on which they were invited to the school.

An external sector that has been involved with the schools is business and industry. Many links have been formed. One of the arrangements promises jobs to students who persist in their education. This venture, modeled after the Boston Compact in the United States, has been a powerful sign of the interest that the for-profit sector has shown in the schools.

Unlike the situation in the United States, however, higher education has evinced little interest in the schools. The sort of school/college collaboration that proliferated in the United States during the 1980s has no counterpart in England. The difference may be attributable to an absence of incentives. American institutions of higher education are mostly nonselective and are very much affected by the

preparation of students in the schools. In England, though, the high level of selectivity in higher education tends to diminish concern about inadequate preparation. Those students never make it to university classrooms.

American visitors to English schools thought about the implications of what they were seeing. Learning from each other means drawing lessons from the experiences. With this in mind, these are some ideas to bear in mind.

Implications for Practice/Policies in U.S.

Governance

The governance structure for elementary and secondary schools in the United States is changing. While it is still uncertain what will emerge, it seems rather likely that the ways that some schools are run in the future will differ from today's patterns. The trend toward site-based management, for example, will shift responsibility for operating schools to smaller, more localized units. Meanwhile, the move toward greater choice by families in selecting schools for their children will produce a freer and more competitive market, even if it only means choosing from among the neighborhood schools in one's own school district.

England is still experimenting with new governance forms—calling the approach "local management of schools," but the fact that changes began sooner in England means that there might be something for Americans to learn. The governing bodies that English law has mandated for each school, for instance, bear some resemblance to the approach being implemented in Chicago. Individual schools in England will get allocations from their local educational authorities and then decide on all matters of expenditure, including staffing.

The policy of eliminating mandated attendance zones in England so that students may select schools contains elements of the American choice proposal. Publicly-funded

schools in England now even have the option of "opting out," that is severing ties with the local educational authority and going it alone. Such a school is then maintained by direct grants from the national government. This would be equivalent to a neighborhood school in New York or Pittsburgh seceding from its school district and operating with money received directly from Albany or Harrisburg.

These grant-maintained schools are a new category created by the 1988 Education Reform Act. Grant-maintained schools are required to provide a free education and to follow the national curriculum. They are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. An application to the Secretary of State for grant-maintained status has to be preceded by a ballot of the school's parents. The Secretary of State may approve or reject the proposal to become a grant-maintained school.

Some American advocates of choice speak of a "free market" for schools. In England, there is a feeling that a marketplace philosophy is coming into play as schools increasingly are having to compete for students. In fact, some schools are publishing brochures and adopting public relations techniques in an effort to "sell" themselves to the families of prospective students. The size of enrollment affects the allocation a school receives. Indications are that schools that cannot attract adequate numbers of students may find their existence imperiled. There is much here for Americans to examine and observe as the implications of choice are weighed in the United States.

This attention to the marketplace also has been an impetus for schools to find ways of raising money from private sources in order to supplement their grants from the government, an approach in which some interest has been shown in the United States, as well. Some local educational authorities in England are considering ways to promote the rental of school facilities by community groups on weekends and during

after-school hours. Other schools are talking to professional fundraisers about conducting campaigns in their behalf.

Another aspect of the new forms of school governance in England that could be instructive to Americans has to do with the question of how much authority for local school management should be turned over to the teachers. Some teachers encountered by the American visitors were disappointed by what they considered the slim role that they had in setting policy. As American schools move in the direction of local management the role of teachers is apt to be a prominent issue.

National Standards

In the United States there is talk of national goals and of a national program to assess progress in meeting those goals. The process, led by the White House, has been from the top-down rather than from bottom-up. In this respect, it resembles the move in England to impose a national curriculum and national assessment. Visiting American educators found their colleagues in England feeling as if they were reacting, not contributing. "There is a sense that no one really IN education is involved," said an American visitor.

Ten subjects were identified for inclusion in the national curriculum. A companion system of national assessment is seen as a way of encouraging each school to help students reach their full potential in the designated subjects.

Yet, a school day has room for just so much work and the discussion of the national curriculum in England has been dogged by controversies over how much time should be given to each subject. Proponents of each subject worry that it will suffer by comparison with others. There is talk of some subjects becoming "second-class." The idea that older students can have the option of narrowing their curriculum and concentrating on fewer subjects in greater depth has brought howls of outrage from those favoring subjects most apt to be abandoned.

So England's experience as it implements a national curriculum may be a reminder to Americans that the time limitations of the school day place certain constraints on the imposition of standards.

Assessment

English education offers some fascinating possibilities for Americans who are seeking methods of assessment that offer alternatives to norm-referenced tests and to questions with multiple-choice responses. Americans who would like to banish certain kinds of tests have the chance in looking at English schools to see both the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives.

It is possible to view a system in which assessment does not lend itself to the sorts of comparisons among students, classes and schools that are so prevalent in the United States. Those who would like to evaluate the impact of deemphasizing comparisons can do so by studying the situation in England.

Portfolios are used to great advantage in English schools and records of achievement also are useful in enlarging the basis upon which to judge the kinds of experiences that students have had. The exercise books that are used so widely are a vehicle for a conveying a sense of a student's thoughts and progress.

At the secondary level, the extensive use of essay examinations shows what can happen when assessment relies on long written responses. Also, the GCSE and A-Level examinations are, to some observers, examples of what can be achieved in a synergism of test and curriculum. These examinations also show the value of assessing performance tasks.

An aspect of institutional evaluation that particularly impressed the American visitors was the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), an independent organization within the Department of Education and Science that has no counterpart in the United States. Representatives of the HMI conduct inspections at schools of all kinds

throughout the country. These inspections culminate in written reports that give detailed findings about broad aspects of the school's operations. Included are discussions of such features of the school as quality of teaching, standards of learning, attendance, pupil/teacher ratios, relations with parents and community, curriculum, assessment, staffing, resources, and facilities. Apparently, these reports can exert great influence on the schools.

Principals

The very title, head teacher, connotes a difference between those who direct schools in England and the principals of American schools. Some aspects of the English model, adapted to the United States, could improve relationships between teachers and principals, as well as put principals in closer touch with classroom issues. "The 'everyone teaches' scheme may keep administrators more in the position of sharing teacher concerns than in America, where a 'we' and 'they' attitude often exists," said a visiting American educator.

At a time when shared-decisionmaking and teacher empowerment are starting to upset traditional hierarchical patterns in American schools, the model of the head teacher is intriguing to inquiring American eyes. Also, those who maintain that American schools are top-heavy with administrators can view in England a model of the school in which administration is lean and decide whether this approach—with its harried, overworked heads—is as desirable in actuality as it is in the abstract.

Teachers

The extent of collegiality among teachers in many of the English schools that were visited made a strong impression on the Americans, who saw something that they said was lacking in some of their schools at home. Further exploration of the factors that lead to such ties among teachers could be fruitful for American educators.

For the Americans, the study visit itself underscored the desirability of overcoming isolation. It was a reminder of what can be gained through observation in other classrooms, in other schools. American educators, who are thinking these days about restructuring, saw clearly how important it is to widen one's focus if schools are to be changed. One could not escape, as well, the implications for professional development, which could benefit by exposing future teachers and veteran teachers to more varied examples of actual practice.

In addition, the Americans were impressed by the degree to which they saw and heard English colleagues, formally and informally, engaging each other in conversations about the curriculum and about pedagogy. The Americans got their own taste of this experience as they talked in small groups each day about what they had seen. Those who work at schools where such conversations are infrequent realized what they were missing.

Seeing the working conditions of urban teachers in another country and having the opportunity to gauge the morale of those teachers brought home to the Americans the universality of some experiences. Also, those who would like to see it easier for American teachers to move from district to district and from state to state might find a model in England. The role of the national government in regard to salaries, pensions, and professional requirements means much greater portability than exists in the United States. There is a truly national market for teachers.

The study visit did not include an examination of the preservice training of teachers. This would be a logical area for inquiry, especially given the new wave of interest in the United States in revamping teacher education.

Building Community

The daily assembly, stripped of its religious content, offers a marvelous opportunity for building community. Held at the beginning of the schoolday, as in England, the

assembly is a time for greetings. It is a chance to get a preview of the day's activities and to strengthen allegiance to each other and to the school. This is when common experiences can be shared by all of the adults and students who are part of the school community. Each day a different group of students has the opportunity to make a presentation reflecting the interests of those students, adding to their sense of competence.

American schools are seeking ways to foster a sense of belonging among students. Daily assemblies, handled well, could create a situation in which students actually want to attend school and look forward to each day. On the other hand, schools in England tend to have smaller enrollments than those in the United States and it might be impractical for a large school to try to have a daily assembly. The sense of intimacy that seemed a part of the gathering in England might be difficult to attain.

Another contribution to community in England came from the displays of student work that the visitors found. These certainly could inspire emulation in the United States. Proud students were surrounded by works of their own making. The impact on the whole atmosphere was marvelous to behold.

Organization and Content

There is much for Americans to observe in English schools so far as self-paced learning with continuous progress is concerned. Also, given the controversy in the United States over retention and promotion policies, it would be worth looking at the English practice of not holding back students.

In addition, multi-age grouping and heterogeneous grouping can be seen readily in English schools, allowing Americans to ponder the significance of these practices, which have stirred so much discussion in the United States. Another aspect of English schools that would be of interest to Americans is the way in which a class of students remains together as a group for several years.

Interest in child-centered education is growing among American educators. In England, there is the chance to see what happens when the teacher does less lecturing and the student takes more responsibility for learning. The favorable and unfavorable outcomes were noted by the American visitors.

There is a trend in teaching in the United States toward an individualized approach. In the abstract, this sounds like a good idea, but it is easy to lose sight of the difficulties posed for teachers. American educators who observed classes in England felt that too often they saw students for whom individualized studies meant being left on their own with little interaction between student and teacher. This served to remind the Americans that a potentially desirable approach may be fraught with problems that must be addressed if learning is to be achieved.

Clearly, English students write more than American students do. American educators who say they want students to write more can see how this objective is pursued and what results it yields. Americans can also find out what this means in terms of a teacher's workload and discover how English teachers manage to provide feedback to their students.

A more integrated approach to presenting the curriculum is used in English schools than in the United States. This is true particularly at the primary level, but there are also examples to be seen at the secondary level.

Also, at a time of growing interest in figuring out how the schools teach about religion and values there might be something to learn from what the English do in religious education.

Equity

Urban schools in both England and the United States are confronted by increasingly diverse student populations. There have been significant differences in the educational responses in the two countries.

A review of the way English schools handle equity issues should not be pursued in an attempt to sit in judgment, but as a way of learning how some of the same challenges that manifest themselves in the United States have been played out elsewhere. This would be just one more way in which Americans can appraise their own responses and, perhaps, find new ideas.

England and the United States, despite their common language, are different societies with vastly different histories and traditions. Yet, both find themselves at this juncture with urban schools in which the demography has changed sharply. Both countries and their people will benefit if the two nations can learn from each other and learn together on matters of good will and equity.